

How to assist your child with their writing.

I have read this piece of writing.

I asked my child what the purpose of the writing was.

Focus on the learning over work. Take a moment to ask your child what the purpose of each assignment is, what do they think their teacher wants them to learn, and get better at, as a result. Then monitor the learning, not the work.

I asked my child what questions he/she had asked his/her teacher about the writing.

Ask your child, "What questions did you ask today?" Our questions drive us as learners.

When I found an error that had been missed I asked if he/she could find it.

Challenge but don't rescue. We learn a lot from making mistakes, taking risks to try new things. When your child encounters difficulties with homework, don't jump in to solve the problem and rescue him/her. Instead, ask questions that will help him/her to think through the problem, identify, and choose a course of action for moving forward.

I have told him/her that they did a great job planning their writing.

I told him/her that they really worked hard on this and have learnt a lot.

I told him/her that they are really developing as a writer.

Develop a growth mindset. A belief that intelligence and ability grow and develop over time, as opposed to something that is fixed and set. Develop this growth mindset in your child by focusing your praise on progress, learning, and effort (You really worked hard on this and have learned a lot. You did a great job of developing a plan and following it through. You've really developed as a musician.), as opposed to ability (You're so clever. Look how smart you are; you did that so fast.)

I said, "That's an interesting way to explain something."

I said, "Your piece of writing really made me think."

I said, "I like the way you made connections with your experiences."

I said, "That's a perspective I had not thought about."

Name and notice thinking. Use the language of thinking to name and notice your child is using and thus make it more visible. This is especially important when praising and give feedback: That's an interesting theory. I like how you have used what you already know to make connections. That's a perspective I hadn't thought about.

I have read a piece of writing that I found interesting to my child.

Make your own thinking visible. The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky said, “Children grow into the intellectual life around them.” You are a model for your child of what it means to be a thinker and learner. Model your own interests, passions, curiosity, reflection, learning, and thinking for your child. Make your own thinking visible to them as a model.

After reading the writing I asked, “What made you say that?”

This simple question is very powerful for both parents and teachers to use. “What makes you say that?”, in a curious and non-judgmental tone after someone has given a response, we are able to get a window into the thinking behind that person’s initial response. The reason behind the response often tells us much more than the response itself.

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Suggestions from Ron Ritchhart are in italics